



(S//SI) Doing SIGINT in Pakistan

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IA intern [REDACTED] describes what it is like to work at SCS sites in Pakistan, doing both SIGINT reporting and collection (TS//SI)

(TS//SI) For approximately two and one-half months this summer, I had the unique experience of being able to forward deploy to Pakistan to work at SCS* sites in Islamabad and Lahore. Although I had been working as a reporter and analyst in SID's Pakistan Branch for approximately 8 months prior to my TDY, I was excited to learn about the technical aspects of SIGINT collection and to provide support to the variety of SIGINT customers forward deployed throughout the region.



(U) The author pictured with al-Qa'ida graffiti in Murre, Pakistan. The building is a long-abandoned brewery built under British rule.

(S//SI) Because this was my first time living and working in a different country, I was not really sure what to expect once I finally landed in Islamabad. However, as I met the rest of the team that I would be working with for the next 74 days, I could see that they were very knowledgeable and dedicated to their jobs and they quickly made me feel right at home.

(TS//SI) Because I was already familiar with the target, I was able to jump into SIGINT product reporting via Local Support Reports (LSRs) but was also encouraged to branch out into other SIGINT areas besides reporting. I spent time with the collectors learning about the various signal types that were collected at the site, about the signals processing gear, and about various collection systems - I was even able to physically tune in a signal or two using the spectrum analyzer and dish controller in the site's collection center.

(S//SI) As my technical knowledge increased, I became involved in evaluating the content of new signals that were being targeted and collected, examining the various types of traffic being carried on the signal and then determining where the traffic came from. In addition to becoming involved in various DNR* collection projects, I was also able to branch out into the DNI* world, learning about DNI collection and processing and basic DNI traffic analysis.

(S//SI) Because of the diversity of the target, working in Pakistan provided me with the opportunity to become involved in a wide range of projects: because I was forward deployed, I was able to help provide near-real time support to counterterrorism operations and was able to help in the exploitation of DNR and DNI lead information gathered through SIGINT and HUMINT.

(TS//SI) These efforts paid their greatest dividends when one of the site's terrorist targets who was being tracked via SIGINT was



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apprehended in mid-August. It was quite exciting to know that I helped play a role in the target's capture and it was also very enlightening to be a first-hand witness to "SIGINT in action" and to see how the close collaboration between SCS, NSA, and CIA personnel can produce real results.

(TS//SI) In addition to tracking specific terrorist targets, I was also involved in helping to exploit and analyze lead information related to several threats on the U.S. Embassy itself. Although Pakistan is not as openly dangerous an area as other places, a real threat does exist there as evidenced by the recent 28 October bombing at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad [REDACTED]

(S//SI) While security was a constant concern, I was pleasantly surprised at the level of freedom that Embassy personnel had and was equally surprised at the fine shopping and restaurants to be found throughout Islamabad -- cheap prices, high quality handicrafts, and numerous large marketplaces made for a suitcase that was much, much fuller on my return trip than it was when I departed the States.

(S//SI) Overall, my TDY experience was one of most enriching experiences of my entire life from both a personal and professional perspective. I was able to gain broad professional knowledge and experience that made me a better and more well-rounded analyst and living and working in Pakistan for an extended period of time provided me with a unique personal experience that gave me insight into an entirely different culture that I would otherwise never have been exposed to.

*(U) Notes:

SCS = Special Collection Service. For further info, see the [SCS mission overview](#) page.

DNR = Dial Number Recognition

DNI = Digital Network Intelligence

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